

EBOOKS: CHANGING THE FACE OF BOOKS

by Emily Felt



INTRODUCTION

The written world changed when Gutenberg built his printing press with moveable type. This revolutionary invention prepared the way for the mass publication of books. Now, much like the original Gutenberg, Project Gutenberg seeks to imitate the printing press's impact through electronic publication. Since its beginnings in 1971, Project Gutenberg has created over 18,000 electronic books. The number of titles is expanding daily, as is the amount of information available to persons everywhere. While the impact of the eBook is not as revolutionary as the original printing press, it is influencing education today. Teachers and students are increasingly using multimedia in the learning process, and eBooks play a vital role in that. Providing easy access to classic and influential works, eBooks allow more students to take advantage of the learning of the past in a format of today.

Johnson and Harroff (2006) identify the growing concern of declining literacy today. eBooks may counter this trend.

Ebooks are more likely to be part of the solution rather than a symptom of the aliteracy problem. Rather than focusing solely on digitizing print text and worrying about redefining the term book, publishers of electronic materials should take full advantage of the multimodal learning styles that can be addressed by well-designed electronic publications." (p.10)

Students today have always known computers and are accustomed to having all kinds of information at their fingertips. Why deny them that kind of access to great literature?

Electronic book publishers are working to make their niche in the research process. They offer such features as searching, note taking, bookmarking certain pages, and creating a book list for later use. All of these features are designed to simplify and streamline research. In many instances librarians first introduce patrons to eBooks and show the potential of eBooks. Johnson and Harroff (2006) wrote, "With the rise of electronic literacy supplementing traditional forms,

librarians are in an ideal position to show the new generation of readers how content transcends form" (p.12).

TUTORIALS

While most people have long since mastered the art of turning pages in print books, navigating an eBook can be a bit more challenging. With various eBook vendors developing different navigational controls, it can be difficult to figure out all of the features and quirks. These tutorials demonstrate some of the basics of eBook navigation and highlight how different vendors package their eBooks.

Austin College, Abell Library's *NetLibrary eBook tutorial* (<http://abell.austincollege.edu/Abell/Elinfor/ebooktutorial.htm>)

With screen shots from NetLibrary, this tutorial is a great way to become familiar with how NetLibrary looks and works. It takes you step by step through the process of creating an account, searching for and viewing an eBook, adding notes, and checking out the eBook. A table of contents with links throughout the page allows for quick navigation between sections.

Central Missouri State University, James C. Kirkpatrick Library's *Using eBooks tutorial* (<http://library.cmsu.edu/tutorials/ebook.htm>)

This tutorial offers hints on how to use several of the popular eBook providers today, including: NetLibrary, FirstSearch Books, History eBook Project, ABC-CLIO eBooks, and XReferPlus. Clearly listed, in table format, are the ways that each of these vendors allow you to access, view, checkout, print, download, and email their eBooks.

Franklin University, *Using eBooks Tutorial* (http://www.franklin.edu/en_us/library.franklin.edu/Instructional+ResourcesLibrary+Services+and+Resources/)

Using a flash format, this tutorial demonstrates searching and accessing eBooks in Electronic Reference Books, Safari Tech Books Online, and NetLibrary. With helpful hints on searching, brows-

ing, limiting, and evaluating resources this thirteen-minutes tutorial is very thoroughly demonstrates the features of these eBook providers.

WEB SITES

Like most online resources, there are eBook websites that are free for everyone to access, and those that require a subscription. Fortunately, there are also sites that index and report on the eBooks that exist, no matter where they are located. The subscription eBook vendors provide useful features to make using their eBooks for research much easier. The free eBook providers don't necessarily have the handy note taking and book list features. But, no matter what form the eBooks come in, they tend to have similar options for finding and navigating an eBook.

Digital Book Index (<http://www.digitalbookindex.org/>)

This is the largest index for eBooks. Fully searchable by title, author, and publisher it has links to over 121,000 eBook titles. From popular fiction to reference materials, from the Gutenberg Project to Bibliomania, this site quite literally has it all. While not all the books that you can find here are free, using the site is.

International Digital Publishing Forum
(<http://www.idpf.org/>)

Formally the Open eBook Forum, the IDPF is a "trade and standards association for the digital publishing industry." Their site is full of information about digital publishing, from surveys to recent news to companies and organizations that have joined the IDPF. They even have a document library where you can find information such as eBook Bestsellers and eBook Sales Stats.

Wisconsin Public Library Consortium "... and ebooks for all" (<http://lepton.wils.wisc.edu/ebooks/>)

This pathfinder looks at the past, present, and future of eBooks. Annotated lists of current vendors along with links to their websites make this a great resource for any library researching what eBook products and services are available today, and what's on the horizon.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

Books24x7
(<http://corporate.books24x7.com/home2.asp>)

Books 24x7 focuses on providing thousands of the most current and important business and technology books. Their books are conveniently listed by topic for easy browsing. They also sort them by books recently added and the top books from the previous week. Features include being able to bookmark, take notes, and create bookshelf folders.

History E-Book Project (<http://www.historyebook.org/>)

The American Council of Learned Societies developed the History E-Book Project to provide Internet access to high-quality history texts. They offer advanced search and browse features to access their collection, catalog records for the books, as well as an option to purchase the book in print.

Indiana University Library: Database by Type > Electronic Books and Texts (<http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=1046&mode=type&resourceType=6>)

Even though most of IU's resources are available only to IU affiliates, this long list of eBooks and full-text resources is a great way to become aware of the large number of resources available.

NetLibrary (<http://netlibrary.com/>)

NetLibrary has over 6,000 eBooks on a variety of subjects. With features allowing you to take notes, keep book lists, and access reference materials, NetLibrary is designed to facilitate research.

FREE EBOOKS

Bartelby.com Great Books Online
(<http://www.bartleby.com/>)

Providing access to reference, verse, fiction, and nonfiction, Bartleby.com offers a lot to the eBook user. The very usable format provides lots of links, helpful menus, and easy access to a wide range of important literary resources.

Librarians' Internet Index: Full-Text Works
(<http://lii.org/pub/subtopic/1970>)

The Librarians' Internet Index helpfully links to 39 reliable websites with full-text literary works. These include verse, fiction, nonfiction, classics and historical works. From the homepage, you can access the full-text section by selecting Arts & Humanities, Literature & Books, and then Full-Text Works.

The Online Library of Liberty
(<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/index.php>)

Made up of over 1,000 titles relating to freedom, liberty, government, and the free market, the Online Library of Liberty earns its name. Freely available to all, and helpfully indexed by subject, this site makes accessible the fundamental literature that helped shape America.

The Perseus Digital Library
(<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>)

This site is a digital library focused on making humanities texts widely available. Perseus was started with the goal of making Archaic and Classi-

cal Greek texts more accessible, but has since expanded to include texts from different parts of the humanities.

Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/>)

With over 18,000 freely accessible eBooks, Project Gutenberg is the largest single collection of eBooks today. In addition to offering English language materials, it also offers eBooks in a variety of languages from Afrikaans to Yiddish. They have quick links to their "Top 100 eBooks," as well as to eBooks that have recently been posted.

ARTICLES

There are many different opinions about eBooks – some people believe they will be the death of the printed book, others see it as filling a different need than regular books, and some just worry that librarians are not getting onboard fast enough to influence the future of eBooks. These articles represent these points of view. The one thing that everyone agrees upon is that eBooks are here and they are not going away. Now is the time to evaluate this resource and decide how to incorporate it into libraries of all types.

Abram, S. (2004). eBooks: Rumors of our death are greatly exaggerated. *Information Outlook*, 8(2), 14-15. While eBooks have had their ups and downs over the past few years, the future is still bright. This article focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of eBooks. One of the main advantages is easy access. They are easily searchable and if only a certain section of a book is needed, eBooks can be much easier and faster to use. In conclusion, this article lists several roles that eBooks could take in the future.

Ardito, S. (2000). Electronic books: To 'E' or not to 'E'; that is the question. *Searcher*, 8(4), 28-38. The creation and expansion of the electronic book does not mean that paper books will disappear. Each format has certain advantages over the other. Electronic books have the potential to be available to anyone anytime, while paper books are great for curling up with on the couch. This article also goes into the formatting issues of eBooks as well as the legal and ethical issues. It's rather old – but many of the issues that it raises are still relevant today.

Christianson, M. & Aucoin, M. (2005). Electronic or print books: Which are used? *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services*, 29(1), 71-81. In this case study done at Louisiana State University, the usage of print and electronic books are compared. The findings reveal that while eBooks are not used as heavily as print books, they are still impacting circulation. They found that eBook usage

varied the widely based on the subject areas, with Library Science students being one of the heaviest users of eBooks.

Croft, R.; & Bedi, S. (2004). eBooks for a distributed learning university: The Royal Roads University case. *Journal of Library Administration*, 41(1/2), 133-137. Three years after they first purchased an eBook, the Royal Roads University Library examines whether or not their eBook collection is meeting the needs of its patrons. While eBook use did not necessarily live up to their hopes and expectations, those who did use eBooks were generally pleased with them. They concluded that eBooks were filling a need of their patron base and they planned to continue to expand and develop their collection

Johnson, C.; & Harroff, W. (2006, Spring). The new art of making books. *Library Journal*, 131, 8-12. Looking at the rising generation and their propensity toward using electronic means to gain information, this article discusses the eBook and its place in "multiliteracy." Librarians are in a position to show patrons available electronic resources and teach how to effectively use them. Listed at the end of the article are popular eBook publishers, authoring systems, and websites with free eBook.

Long, S.A. (2003). The case for ebooks: an introduction. *New Library World*, 104 (1/2), 29-32. Even though eBooks are becoming more and more popular, there are restrictions, such as format, software, and hardware, which keep eBooks from becoming fully integrated into libraries today. It is just a matter of time before e-Book producers realize that they must work with libraries to make e-Books as accessible as books.

Pace, A. (2005). Gimme that ebook religion. *Computers in Libraries*, 25(5), 30-32. Through religious metaphor, Pace takes a look at what is happening with eBooks today. While they are not as wildly popular as he predicted they would become five years ago, Google Print and Amazon's *Search Inside the Book* have made eBooks a part of the mainstream. Now it is up to the librarians to make a push for "pluralism" in eBook content.

REFERENCES

About Project Gutenberg. (2005, October 20). Retrieved June 3, 2006, from <http://www.gutenberg.org/about>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Felt (efelt@indiana.edu) is currently an intern at Ivy Tech Community College, Bloomington and will graduate with a Masters in Library Science from Indiana University in May 2007.